

VZCZCXRO9515
PP RUEHBC RUEHDA RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #3793/01 3230457
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 190457Z NOV 07
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4415
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003793

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: Baghdad Services Committee

REF: BAGHDAD #3708

¶1. SUMMARY: Attendance at Dr. Ahmed Chalabi's meeting was down this week, lacking representation from the Ministries of Oil, Electricity and Education. The committee heard for the first time from the Ministry of Trade and Commerce as well as the Ministry of Transportation. The committee did review and further develop several recommendations, many of which were previously discussed. END SUMMARY.

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Services Committee Reviews Previous Recommendations
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¶2. The Baghdad Operations Command (BOC) will designate several forces for the protection of electric stations in Russafa and Al Karkh districts. The Ministry of Electricity (MoE) and the BOC will meet to discuss the details of such an arrangement, including providing the BOC with names of authorized personnel. A second recommendation included installing emergency power lines from the electrical networks to floating pumping stations at the expense of Baghdad Amanat: a report will be submitted at the next Services Committee meeting.

¶3. The Al-Karkh Al-Jamhuri hospital will be handed over to the Ministry of Defense (MoD) to primarily treat the Iraqi Armed Forces and other MoD personnel, the Ministry of Interior (MoI), intelligence personnel and FSP. Civilian access to the hospital is still in discussion, but it appears as though they will at least have access to emergency services. Chalabi ordered a committee from the MoD and the Ministry of Health (MoH) to be assigned to resolve additional issues, including whether the hospital will be staffed by MoD or MoH and who will pay the salaries of those personnel, pay for treatment and medical equipment. MoH offered to partially staff the hospital, but requested that any services rendered to MoD personnel be paid for by the MoD. MoH, in turn, would pay the salaries of their personnel and continue to pay for civilian services.

¶4. The MoH also requested authority to contract with the private sector, as needed, to procure facilities management for housing services, such as food and cleaning services. Chalabi suggested that the MoH approach the Ministerial Committee of Contracts.

¶5. Recommendations for the Baghdad Amanat included repairing the Zublin line of the sewage network until the construction of a new line; importing tools and equipment to clean-up the sewage system; and establishing related operations and maintenance training courses. The Amanat also emphasized that a "Clean-up" day in Baghdad should be a coordinated effort between ministries.

¶6. Oil recommendations reviewed from the previous week included exploring alternative fuel transportation methods to include rail and additional tankers. The MoO is expected to meet with Dr. Chalabi to discuss other issues, giving priority to fuel supplies in Baghdad.

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A Ministry of Transportation Representative Attends
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¶7. The Ministry of Transportation (MoT) delivered a report to the Services Committee noting security and fuel as their greatest needs. The rail from Basra to Baghdad is working; however, it is slowed due to a weak unloading process in Baghdad. This process takes on average eight days, according to the MoT representative. Rails north of Baghdad are capable of moving fuel into the city, but the MoT representative requested that MNF-I and MoD inquire about a particular bridge's status for rail transport as opposed to vehicular transit. The MoT stated that they cannot currently operate a train from Kirkuk to Doura to alleviate the crude shortage at that refinery. In terms of tanker capabilities, the MoT needs additional tankers as well as security in hot areas for such transport.

¶8. Passenger services, particularly bus services in Baghdad, are routinely hindered by road blocks, concrete barriers, military operations, and construction and infrastructure improvement. MoT noted that 90 of 190 new buses ordered have arrived and there are currently 4,000 drivers; however, it is not clear if that number is nation-wide or Baghdad specific. The MoT representative noted that the ministry will be launching a Haj campaign to encourage bus transportation during the holiday.

¶9. Chalabi asked for a more detailed report from the MoT, to include the status of existing bus terminals. He also inquired about the Amanat's role in Baghdad's transportation infrastructure. The MoT rep said that one impediment to bus service is that the private, minibus drivers intimidate city bus drivers, ordering them not to drive their routes.

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A Ministry of Trade and Commerce Representative Attends
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¶10. According to the representative, corruption continues to be a
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problem in the public food distribution system, PDS. There are more ration cards issued than Iraqis registered in the program. Despite adequate food orders, Iraqis do not receive complete rations and food is sometimes expired. Other problems include specific supply shortages, delays at borders and ports, including Turkey and Um Qasr and supply chain problems, including trucking companies, storage and distribution. The MoH requested that all food contained in the rations be inspected and certified by the MoH. The Inspector General noted that a fully equipped lab was available in Basra.

¶11. The Ministry wants to compensate citizens with cash for incomplete rations, and also to compensate people living in areas that were not stable enough to allow delivery of rations. The Ministry of Finance would cut the checks and give them to the local ration agents to distribute.

¶12. Dr. Chalabi requested a detailed report on specific supply shortages to be delivered at the next Services Committee meeting.

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Other Topics of Discussion
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¶13. Prior to the formal commencement of the meeting, Dr. Chalabi announced his idea to create a Service Emergency Center in Russafa. This center would be staffed with representatives from each ministry to provide teams of experts to address service problems throughout the districts and provide services to hot areas. No vote was taken on this recommendation, although Dr. Chalabi did present it at the Friday, I-ESC.

¶14. The MoH discussed a draft incentives package for doctor recruitment. The package includes secure accommodation with the option of ownership. This may contain a time in service requirement. A second incentive would allow doctors to set up and run private practices within MoH facilities and hospitals without charge. The package also contained a tiered increase in compensation to include hazard pay.

Comment

¶15. In addition to his weekly Services Committee meeting, Chalabi has traveled with the USG and Iraqi Army to several areas in and around Baghdad to see service delivery improvements and challenges firsthand. He meets independently with ministries to address various issues and recently attended the Joint Planning Commission (JPC), along with some of his committee members, where they received an overview of projects throughout Baghdad. Through the JPC, local leaders from each city district raise issues and discuss priorities with officials from the various service institutions, including the national ministries, provincial government, Amanat Baghdad, district area councils (DACs) and neighborhood councils (NACs), Gulf Region Division, Multi-National Division Baghdad and the Provincial Reconstruction Development Committee of Baghdad. As Chalabi Services Committee gets off the ground, it is critical that these service entities coordinate their work.

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